

# FABLES™

No. 64

VERTIGO

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WILLINGHAM  
AARON  
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Oct 07

suggested for  
mature readers  
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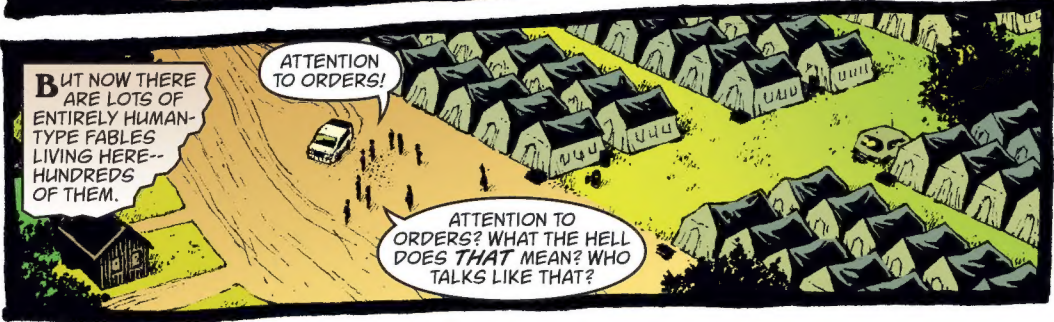
THE FARM--FABLETOWN'S UPSTATE NEW YORK ANNEX FOR THE HOUSING OF NON-HUMAN FABLES.



BUT NOW THERE ARE LOTS OF ENTIRELY HUMAN-TYPE FABLES LIVING HERE--HUNDREDS OF THEM.

ATTENTION TO ORDERS!

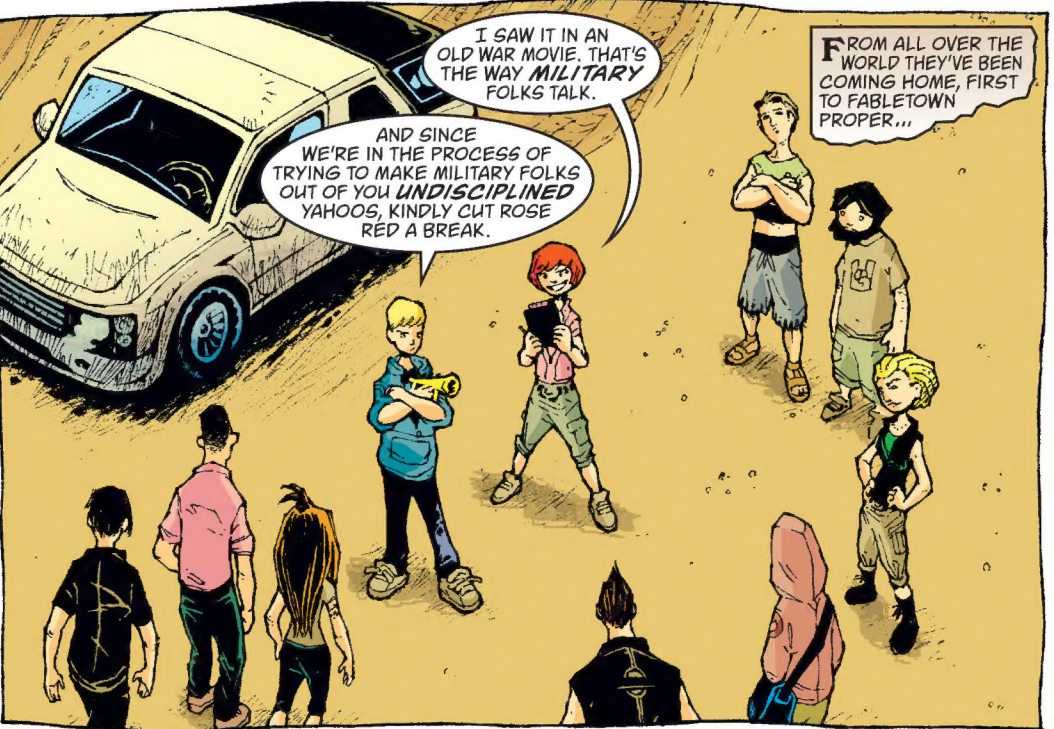
ATTENTION TO ORDERS? WHAT THE HELL DOES THAT MEAN? WHO TALKS LIKE THAT?



I SAW IT IN AN OLD WAR MOVIE. THAT'S THE WAY MILITARY FOLKS TALK.

AND SINCE WE'RE IN THE PROCESS OF TRYING TO MAKE MILITARY FOLKS OUT OF YOU UNDISCIPLINED YAHOO'S, KINDLY CUT ROSE RED A BREAK.

FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD THEY'VE BEEN COMING HOME, FIRST TO FABLETOWN PROPER...



...AND THEN UP TO THE FARM, WHERE THEY'VE BEGUN TRAINING FOR WAR.

OKAY, SO HERE WE GO.

BROOM, ELDERTHORN AND HOPE ARE GOING TO SNIPER SCHOOL.

ALL RIGHT! I MADE IT!

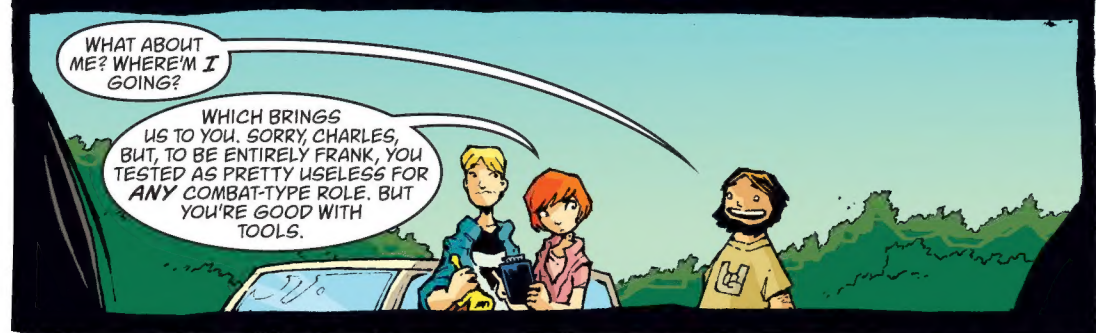
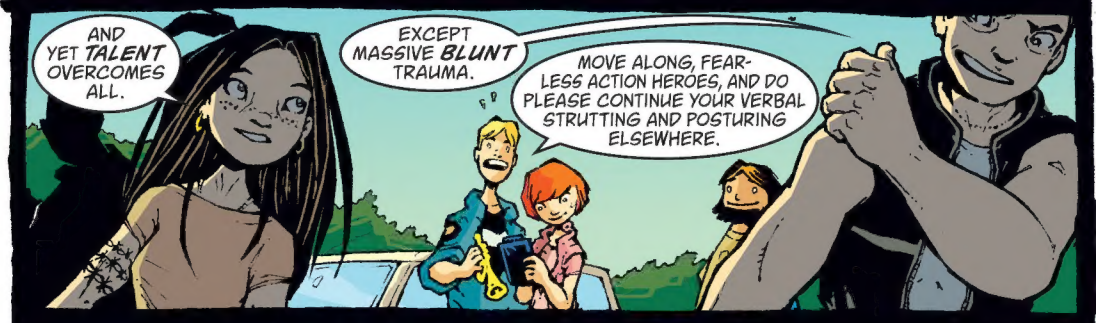
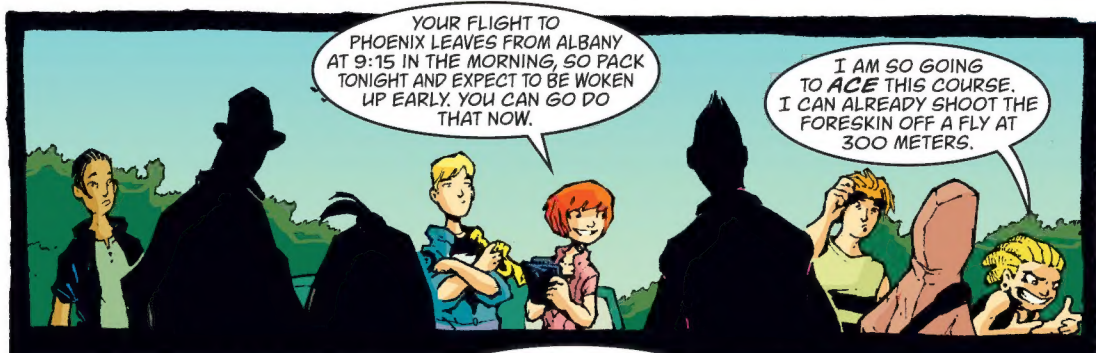


# "THE BIRTHDAY SECRET"

In which we momentarily turn away from the incredible events taking place down the Witching Well to mark an important event in the lives of the Wolf Cubs.

**Bill Willingham** writer - creator  
**Aaron Alexovich** pencils & inks  
**Lee Loughridge** colors  
**Todd Klein** letters

**James Jean** cover  
**Angela Rufino** assistant editor  
**Shelly Bond** editor





SO WE'RE KEEPING YOU HERE, ASSIGNING YOU TO THE SPECIAL ORDNANCE PLATOON, WHERE YOU'LL HELP KEEP THE ANIMAL-ADAPTED WEAPONS SYSTEMS MAINTAINED AND SUPPLIED.

IT'S A VITAL JOB. MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, ARMIES LIVE OR DIE BASED UPON THE QUALITY OF THEIR LOGISTICS.



VITAL MAYBE, BUT NOT VERY HEROIC.

POOR GUY. HE WAS SO EARNEST IN TRAINING.

HE'LL GET OVER IT. WE CAN'T WORRY ABOUT HURT FEELINGS WHEN OUR SURVIVAL'S ON THE LINE.



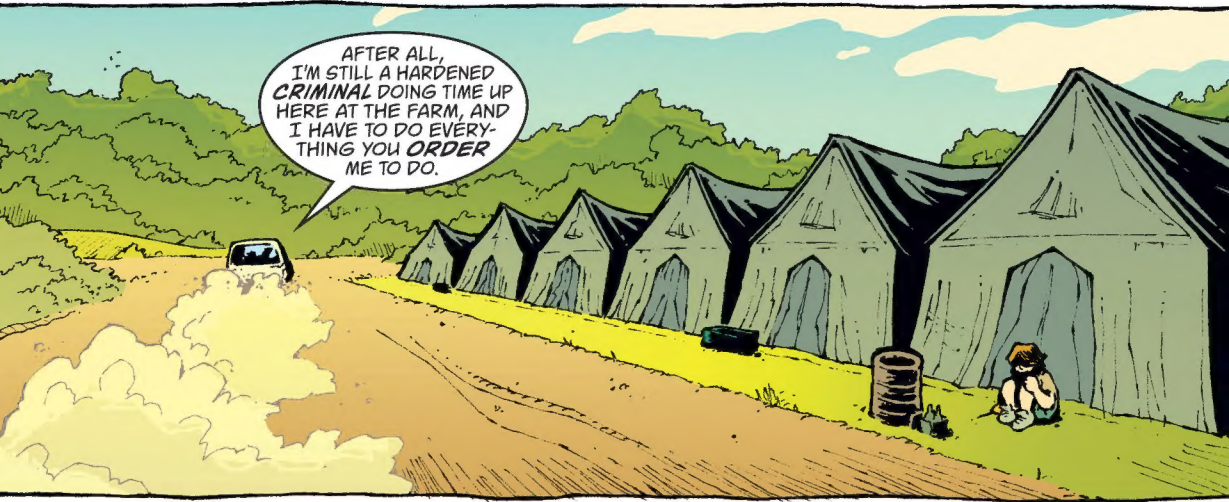
SO, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE DONE WITH WAR STUFF FOR NOW, MR. BLUE. I'M GOING TO DRIVE TODAY'S SUPPLY TRUCK DOWN TO THE CITY. CARE TO GO WITH?

THIS WOULDN'T BE ANOTHER EXCUSE TO SPEND HOURS IN FRONT OF THE MAGIC MIRROR WATCHING THE FLY SHOW, WOULD IT?



IT MIGHT. INTERESTED?

WELL, SINCE YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY TWISTING MY ARM, OKAY. COUNT ME IN.

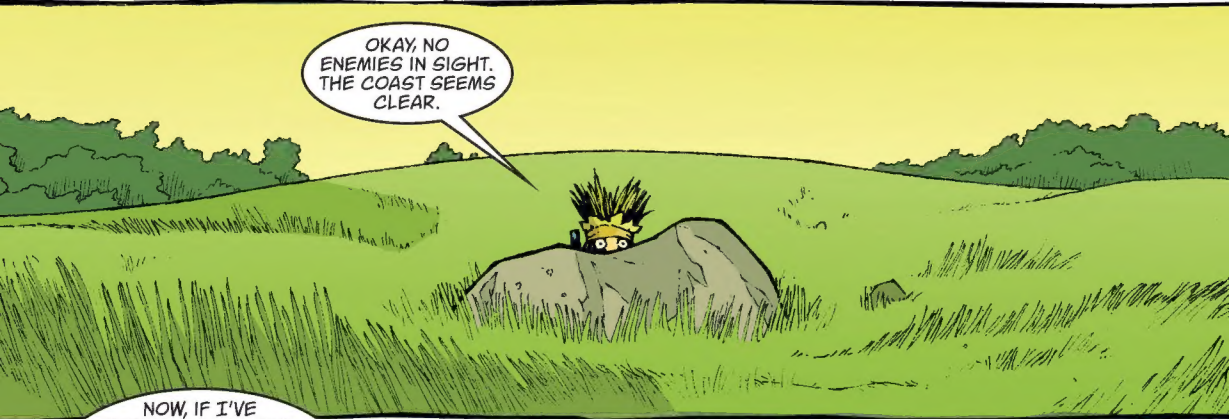


AFTER ALL, I'M STILL A HARDENED CRIMINAL DOING TIME UP HERE AT THE FARM, AND I HAVE TO DO EVERYTHING YOU ORDER ME TO DO.

AND IN ANOTHER PART OF THE VAST, MOSTLY WILD, LANDS BELONGING TO THE FARM...



OKAY, NO ENEMIES IN SIGHT. THE COAST SEEMS CLEAR.



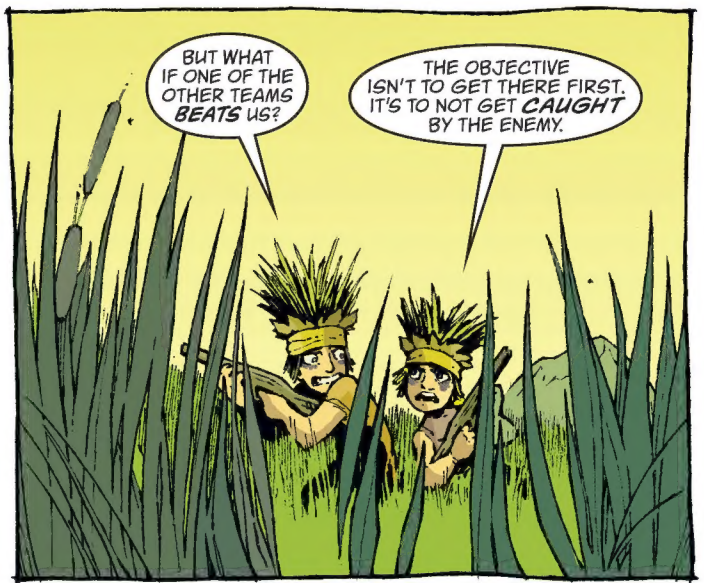
NOW, IF I'VE FIGURED THIS RIGHT, WE NEED TO GO ANOTHER THREE KLICKS DUE WEST AND MAYBE ONE KLICK SOUTH TO OUR DESTINATION, THE MERMAID POND.

I SAY WE TAKE IT SLOW AND CAREFUL. LOW CRAWL ALL THE WAY.



BUT WHAT IF ONE OF THE OTHER TEAMS BEATS US?

THE OBJECTIVE ISN'T TO GET THERE FIRST. IT'S TO NOT GET **CAUGHT** BY THE ENEMY.



YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND GUYS AT ALL. GUYS **ALWAYS** NEED TO GET THERE FIRST.



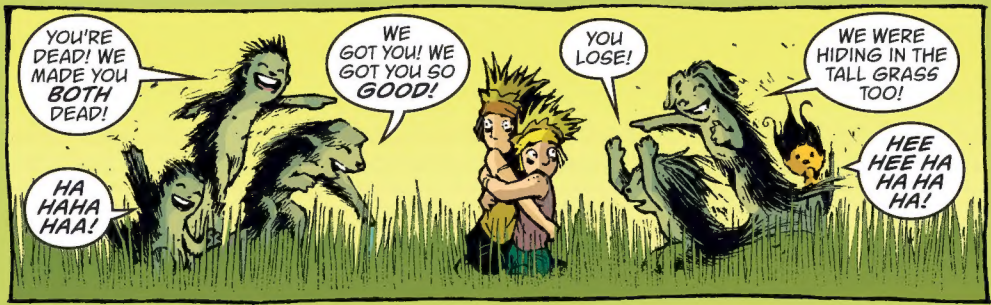
**ROOOOOWN**



**YAAA-AAHH!**

**YAAA-AAHH!**

**AAAARRRRR!**



YOU'RE DEAD! WE MADE YOU BOTH DEAD!

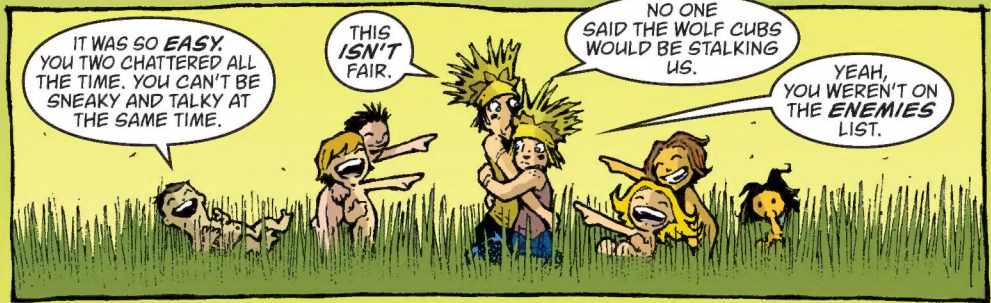
WE GOT YOU! WE GOT YOU SO GOOD!

YOU LOSE!

WE WERE HIDING IN THE TALL GRASS TOO!

HA HAA HAA!

HEE HEE HA HA HA HA!

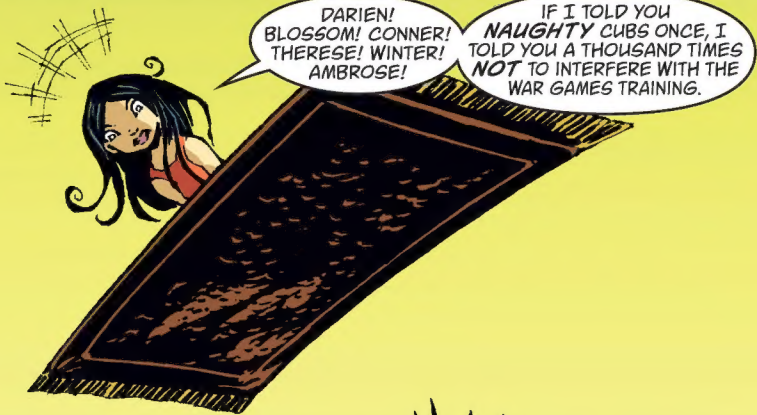


IT WAS SO EASY. YOU TWO CHATTERED ALL THE TIME. YOU CAN'T BE SNEAKY AND TALKY AT THE SAME TIME.

THIS ISN'T FAIR.

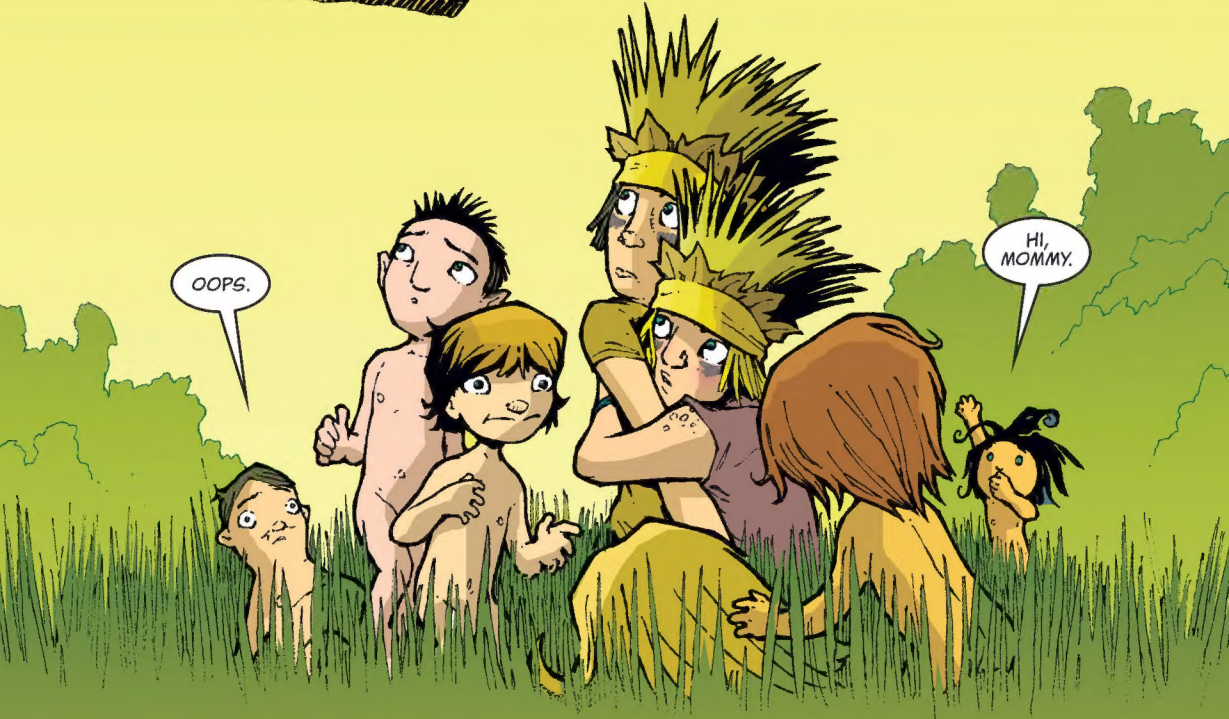
NO ONE SAID THE WOLF CUBS WOULD BE STALKING US.

YEAH, YOU WEREN'T ON THE ENEMIES LIST.



DARIEN! BLOSSOM! CONNER! THERESE! WINTER! AMBROSE!

IF I TOLD YOU NAUGHTY CUBS ONCE, I TOLD YOU A THOUSAND TIMES NOT TO INTERFERE WITH THE WAR GAMES TRAINING.



OOPS.

HI, MOMMY.

AND YOU'RE ALL FAR TOO OLD TO GO RUNNING AROUND NAKED IN HUMAN FORM! CHANGE BACK TO WOLVES THIS INSTANT! AND THEN GET HOME!

SO WE AREN'T OFFICIALLY CAPTURED?

SORRY ABOUT THE TROUBLE, FOLKS. THESE CUBS CAN BE A HANDFUL SOMETIMES WHEN THEIR FATHER'S AWAY. PLEASE GO BACK ABOUT YOUR WAR GAMES.

THIS SUCKS. WE CAN'T GET AWAY WITH ANYTHING NOW THAT MOMMY HAS THE FLYING CARPET.

YEAH, SHE'S ALWAYS EVERYWHERE NOW.

A FEW DAYS LATER, OUTSIDE OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE...

TOTAL CONFIDENCE INCORPORATED, A PRIVATE SPECIAL FORCES AND COMMANDO TRAINING SCHOOL NOW SECRETLY OWNED BY FABLETOWN.

SHHHHHH!





WE'RE CLOSE.  
I CAN SMELL HIS CIGARETTE  
SMOKE. SIGN LANGUAGE ONLY  
FROM HERE ON.

Acknowledged.



Freeze and  
remain silent.



I've  
spotted  
our  
target.



About  
three  
yards  
ahead  
and  
below  
us.



Both  
of you--



--advance slowly.  
Take up a flanking  
firing position on  
the target.





YOU'RE ALL **DEAD**, BY THE WAY.

IF YOU'LL CHECK UNDER MY LASER TARGET VEST, YOU'LL FIND A SMALL PACKAGE WHICH, FOR PURPOSES OF THIS DRILL, WE'LL ASSUME IS AN IMPROVISED EXPLOSIVE DEVICE.

BIGBY!

I HAVE TO SAY YOUR EFFORTS WERE PRETTY **PATHETIC**, BOYS.

BUT YOU **CHEATED**. YOU REMOVED YOUR TARGET VEST. WE SCORED THREE KILLS AGAINST IT.

THE ENEMY DOESN'T PLAY FAIR. YOU'VE JUST LEARNED A VALUABLE LESSON ABOUT **REAL** COMBAT.

THIS WASN'T A FAIR TEST ANYWAY. YOU CAN HEAR AND SMELL US FROM MILES AWAY.

TRUE, BUT LOOK AT IT THIS WAY. IF BY SOME MIRACLE YOU ACTUALLY **DO** LEARN TO SNEAK UP ON ME, YOU CAN SNEAK UP ON ANYONE.

THE EMPIRE WILL HAVE SOME NASTY CUSTOMERS WITH TRAINED, OR MAGIC-ENHANCED SENSES TOO. **COUNT** ON IT. THE ENEMY ALWAYS HAS SURPRISES.

WE'LL GET YOU TOMORROW.

YOU'LL GET SOMEONE TOMORROW--OR TRY TO, ANYWAY--BUT IT WON'T BE ME.

I'M HEADED HOME FOR A WEEK OF R AND R. IT'S MY CUBS' BIRTHDAY, DAY AFTER TOMORROW, AND I'VE ALREADY MISSED AS MANY OF THEM AS I EVER PLAN TO.

REALLY? CONGRATS, BIGBY.

LATER THAT EVENING...

...FIRST TO WELCOME YOU TO ALBANY, AND THANK YOU FOR FLYING WITH US.



THANKS FOR PICKING ME UP, BLUE.

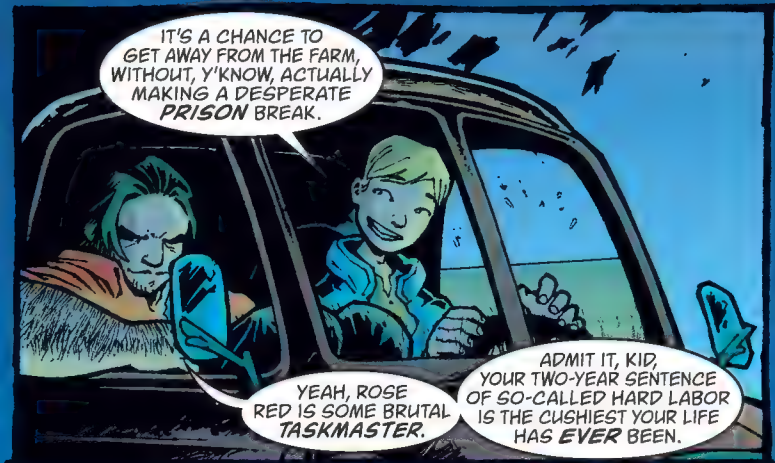
GLAD TO DO IT, BIGBY.



IT'S A CHANCE TO GET AWAY FROM THE FARM, WITHOUT, Y'KNOW, ACTUALLY MAKING A DESPERATE PRISON BREAK.

YEAH, ROSE RED IS SOME BRUTAL TASKMASTER.

ADMIT IT, KID, YOUR TWO-YEAR SENTENCE OF SO-CALLED HARD LABOR IS THE CUSHIEST YOUR LIFE HAS EVER BEEN.



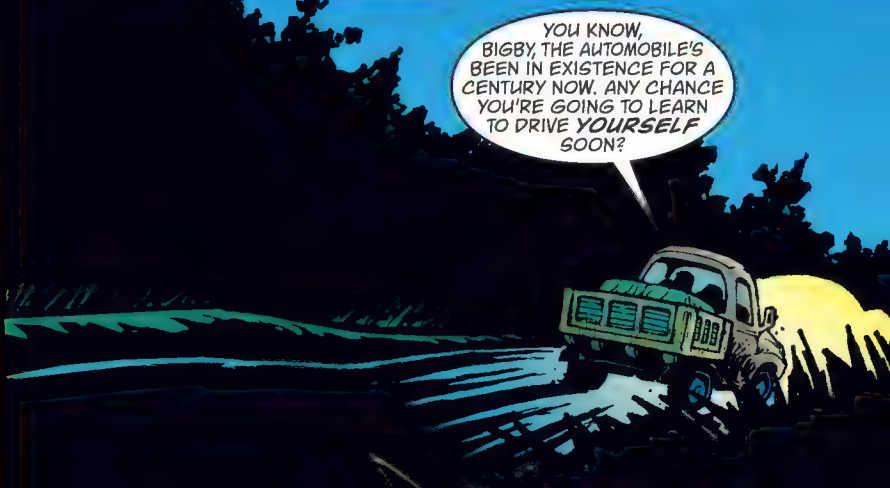
EXCEPT THE NOT-BEING-ABLE-TO-LEAVE-WITHOUT-SPECIAL-PERMISSION PART. THAT'S THE ONE BIT OF FORCED CONFINEMENT THAT CAN'T BE MITIGATED, NO MATTER HOW COMFORTABLE THE PRISON.

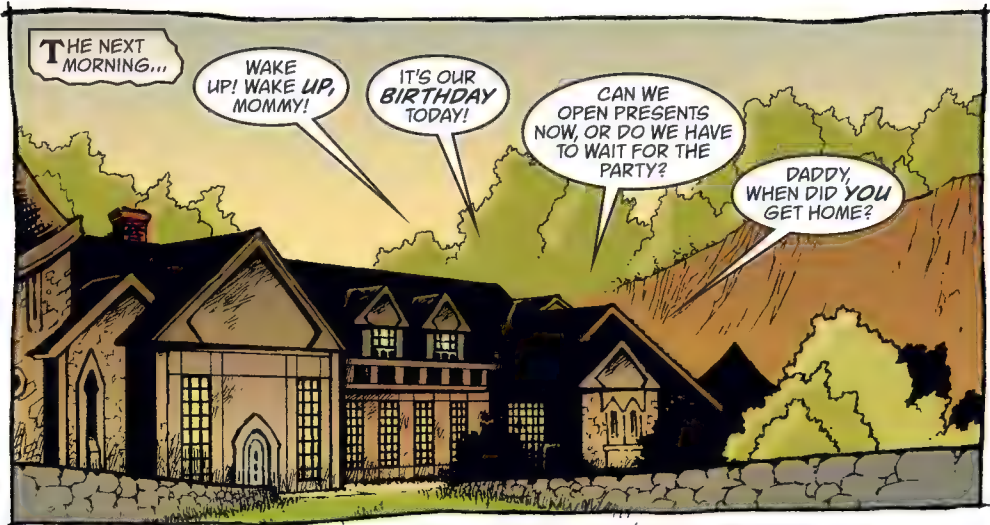
FOR THE FIRST TIME I CAN REALLY UNDERSTAND HOW MANY OF THE ANIMAL FABLES FEEL. AND THEY'VE BEEN STUCK HERE FOR CENTURIES.

ARE YOU GOING TO TALK ALL THE WAY? I'M TRYING TO CATCH A NAP HERE.



YOU KNOW, BIGBY, THE AUTOMOBILE'S BEEN IN EXISTENCE FOR A CENTURY NOW. ANY CHANCE YOU'RE GOING TO LEARN TO DRIVE YOURSELF SOON?





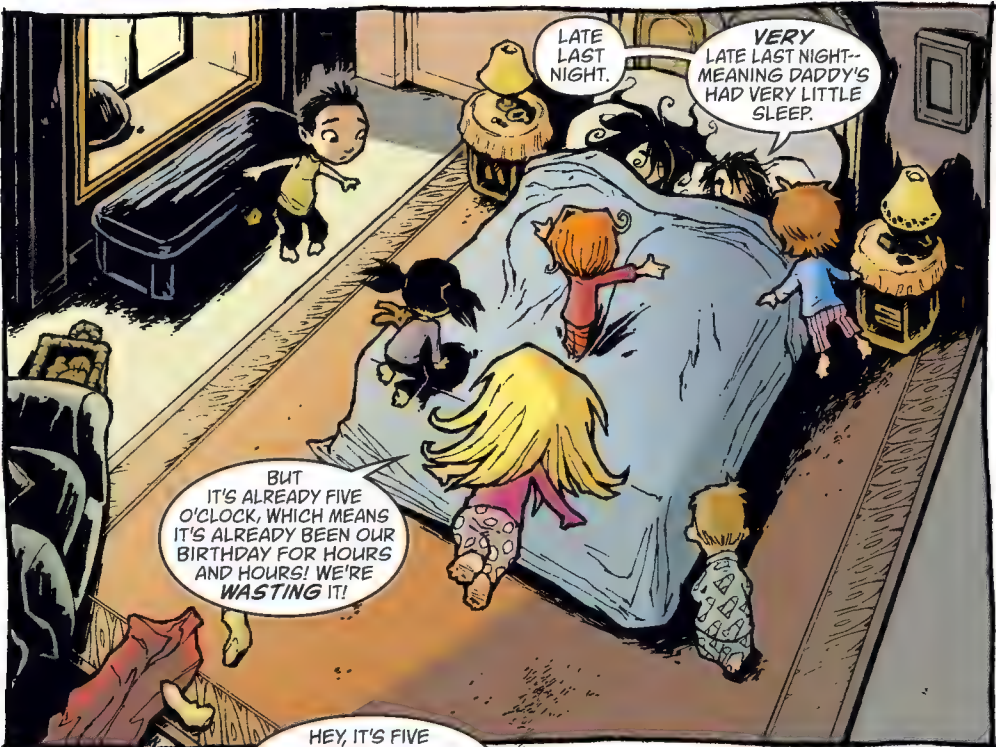
THE NEXT MORNING...

WAKE UP! WAKE UP, MOMMY!

IT'S OUR BIRTHDAY TODAY!

CAN WE OPEN PRESENTS NOW, OR DO WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE PARTY?

DADDY, WHEN DID YOU GET HOME?

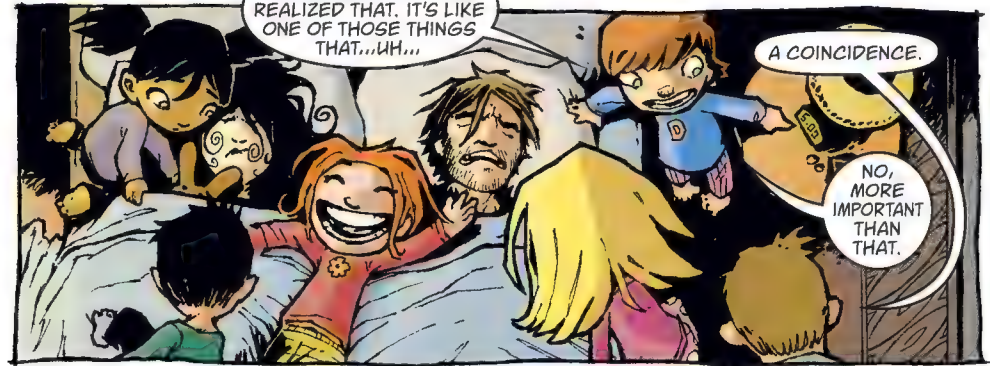


LATE LAST NIGHT.

VERY LATE LAST NIGHT--MEANING DADDY'S HAD VERY LITTLE SLEEP.

BUT IT'S ALREADY FIVE O'CLOCK, WHICH MEANS IT'S ALREADY BEEN OUR BIRTHDAY FOR HOURS AND HOURS! WE'RE WASTING IT!

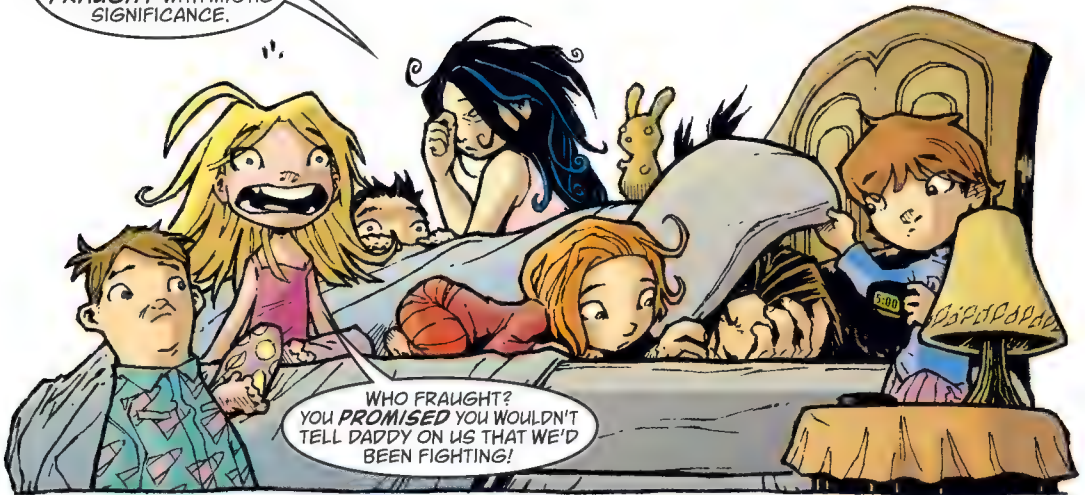
HEY, IT'S FIVE AND WE'RE FIVE! I JUST REALIZED THAT. IT'S LIKE ONE OF THOSE THINGS THAT...UH...



A COINCIDENCE.

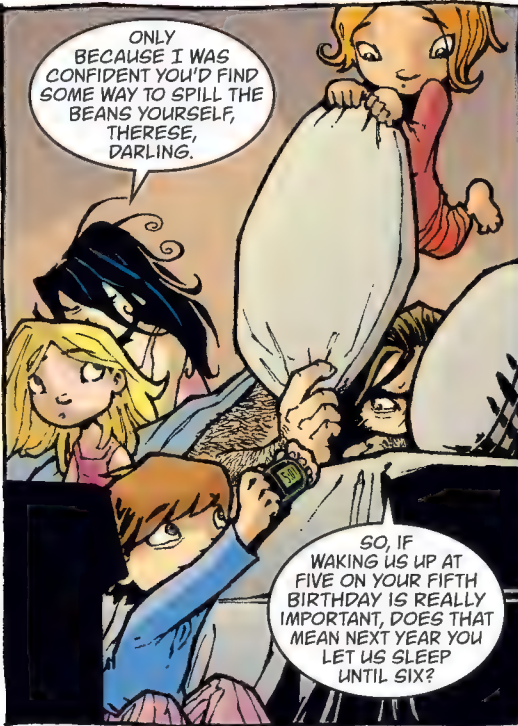
NO, MORE IMPORTANT THAN THAT.

OH YES, I'M CERTAIN IT'S A MYSTERIOUS CONFLUENCE OF EVENTS ABSOLUTELY FRAUGHT WITH MYSTIC SIGNIFICANCE.



WHO FRAUGHT? YOU PROMISED YOU WOULDN'T TELL DADDY ON US THAT WE'D BEEN FIGHTING!

ONLY BECAUSE I WAS CONFIDENT YOU'D FIND SOME WAY TO SPILL THE BEANS YOURSELF, THERESE, DARLING.

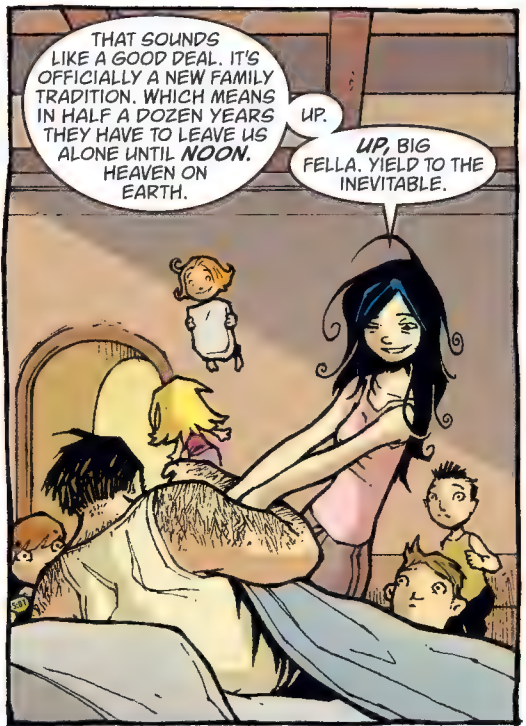


SO, IF WAKING US UP AT FIVE ON YOUR FIFTH BIRTHDAY IS REALLY IMPORTANT, DOES THAT MEAN NEXT YEAR YOU LET US SLEEP UNTIL SIX?

THAT SOUNDS LIKE A GOOD DEAL. IT'S OFFICIALLY A NEW FAMILY TRADITION. WHICH MEANS IN HALF A DOZEN YEARS THEY HAVE TO LEAVE US ALONE UNTIL NOON. HEAVEN ON EARTH.

UP.

UP, BIG FELLA. YIELD TO THE INEVITABLE.



WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR BREAKFAST?

SAUTÉED WOLF CUBS.

AND PAMCAKES, PLEASE.

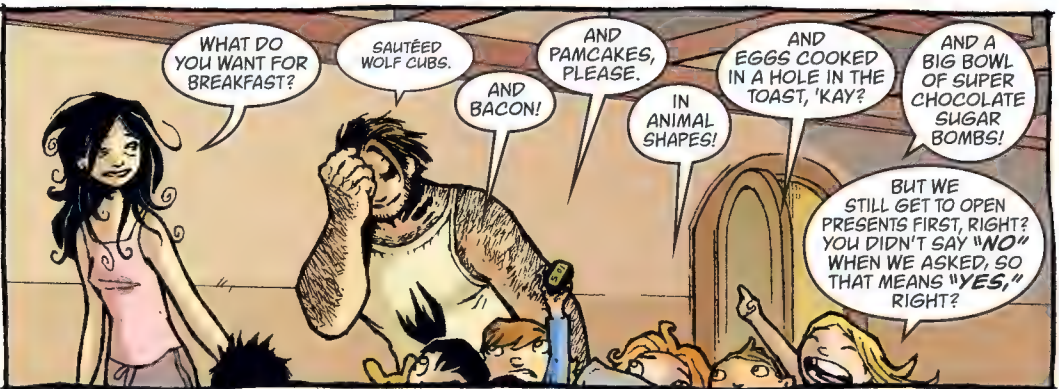
AND BACON!

IN ANIMAL SHAPES!

AND EGGS COOKED IN A HOLE IN THE TOAST, 'KAY?

AND A BIG BOWL OF SUPER CHOCOLATE SUGAR BOMBS!

BUT WE STILL GET TO OPEN PRESENTS FIRST, RIGHT? YOU DIDN'T SAY "NO" WHEN WE ASKED, SO THAT MEANS "YES," RIGHT?



A BIT LATER THAT DAY...

AREN'T WE SUPPOSED TO BE ON OUR WAY TO SNOW AND BIGBY'S BY NOW?

WE WERE INVITED TO THE CUBS' BIRTHDAY PARTY, WEREN'T WE?

OF COURSE WE'RE INVITED. NO WAY WOULD THOSE MONSTERS WILLINGLY PASS UP ALL THE LOOT THEY GET FROM AUNTIE ROSE.

AND YET I CAN'T HELP NOTICING THAT, INSTEAD OF BEING ON OUR WAY TO STATELY WOLF MANOR, WE SEEM TO BE SITTING ON THE FRONT STEPS GOING EXACTLY NOWHERE.

SNOW'S LATE PICKING US UP. SHE WAS SUPPOSED TO SWING BY ON THE FLYING CARPET NEARLY AN HOUR AGO.

I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT, THOUGH. A WOMAN RAISING SIX KIDS AT ONCE IS GOING TO BE LATE FROM TIME TO TIME. ONE OF THE NON-NEGOTIABLE PRICES OF MOTHERHOOD.

TRUE ENOUGH. SO, HAVE YOU EVER THOUGHT ABOUT HAVING CHILDREN OVER THE YEARS?

NOT REALLY. I HAVEN'T EVEN COME CLOSE TO THINKING ABOUT GETTING MARRIED, MUCH LESS HAVING KIDS.

I MEAN, NOT THAT I... UHM... THAT IS, I HAVEN'T EVEN... THERE'S NO ONE TO...





SO...WE'VE BEEN HAVING **QUITE** THE NICE RUN OF WEATHER LATELY. THINK IT WILL HOLD UP?

I HOPE SO. TRAINING THESE NEWCOMERS GOES EASIER IN NICE WEATHER.



WHERE THE HELL IS SNOW? WE'RE BURNING **DAYLIGHT**.

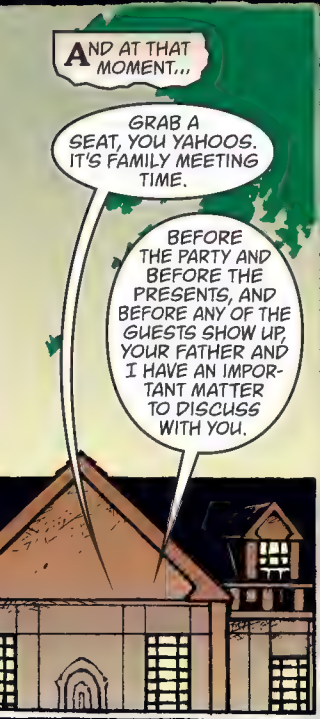
YEAH, AND WHO DECIDED **SHE** GOT TO TAKE OVER EXCLUSIVE USE OF THE FLYING CARPET? **WE'RE** THE ONES WHO SCOPED OUT HOW TO **DRIVE** IT.



AND AT THAT MOMENT...

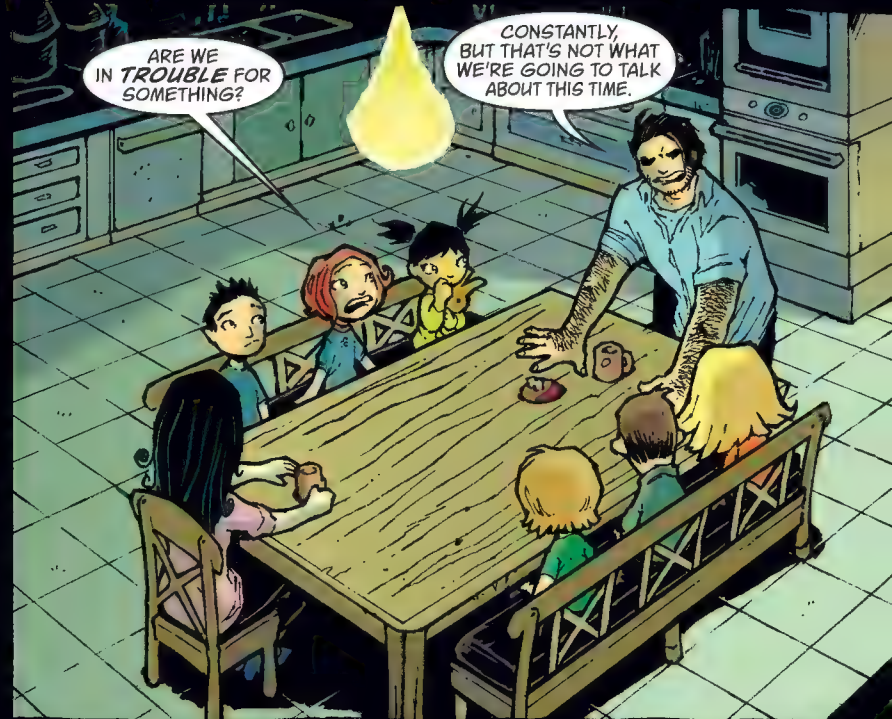
GRAB A SEAT, YOU YAHOOOS. IT'S FAMILY MEETING TIME.

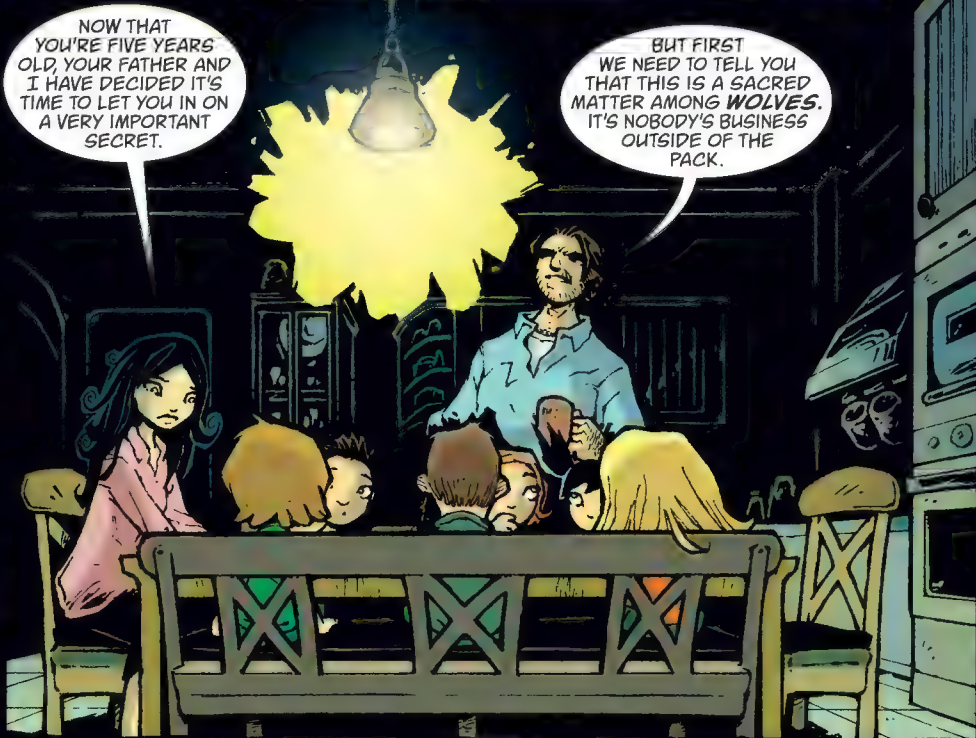
BEFORE THE PARTY AND BEFORE THE PRESENTS, AND BEFORE ANY OF THE GUESTS SHOW UP, YOUR FATHER AND I HAVE AN IMPORTANT MATTER TO DISCUSS WITH YOU.



ARE WE IN **TROUBLE** FOR SOMETHING?

CONSTANTLY, BUT THAT'S NOT WHAT WE'RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT THIS TIME.





NOW THAT YOU'RE FIVE YEARS OLD, YOUR FATHER AND I HAVE DECIDED IT'S TIME TO LET YOU IN ON A VERY IMPORTANT SECRET.

BUT FIRST WE NEED TO TELL YOU THAT THIS IS A SACRED MATTER AMONG *WOLVES*. IT'S NOBODY'S BUSINESS OUTSIDE OF THE PACK.

MR. BLUE DOESN'T GET TO KNOW THIS AND EVEN AUNTIE ROSE DOESN'T GET TO KNOW, BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH SHE'S FAMILY, SHE'S NOT A WOLF AND THIS IS STRICTLY A *WOLF* SECRET.

BUT THEN HOW DOES MOMMY GET TO KNOW? SHE'S NOT A WOLF.

SURE SHE IS. ANYONE WHO CAN GIVE *BIRTH* TO SIX MANGY WOLVES COUNTS AS ONE HERSELF.

THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT, CHILDREN. NO ONE OUTSIDE OF THE EIGHT OF US CAN EVER KNOW WHAT WE'RE ABOUT TO TELL YOU.

YOUR FATHER AND I COULD EVEN BE SENT AWAY TO PRISON.

IF THIS SECRET EVER GETS OUT, EVEN TO OUR MOST *TRUSTED* FRIENDS, WE WOULD ALL BE IN A GREAT DEAL OF TROUBLE.

OR WORSE. SO IF ANY OF YOU DOESN'T THINK YOU CAN *KEEP* THIS SECRET, SPEAK UP NOW AND WE'LL WAIT ANOTHER YEAR TO TELL YOU.





OH, WE ALREADY KNOW THAT. WINTER'S THE RUNT.

I AM NOT! YOU TAKE THAT **BACK**, DAREN!



YES, DARIEN. LEAVE YOUR SISTER ALONE.

BUT SHE IS! EVERYONE KNOWS IT!



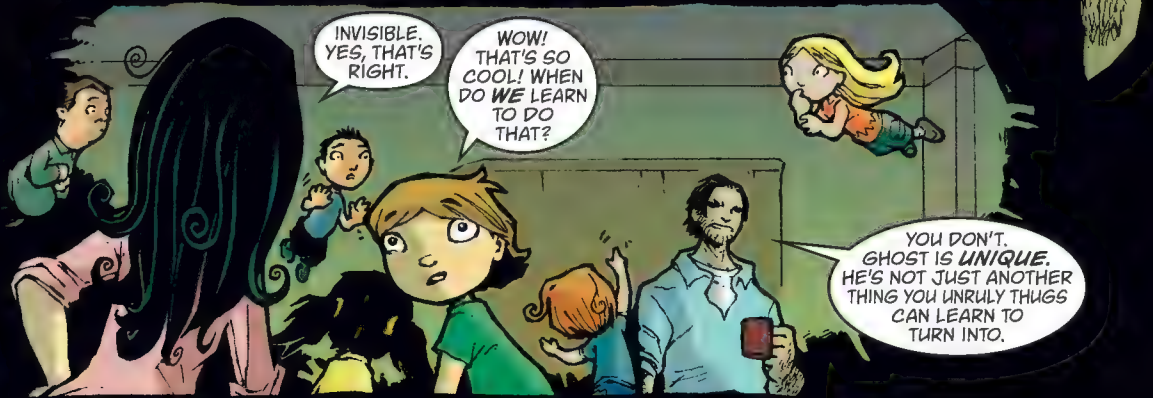
GHOST? MAYBE YOU'D BETTER INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

HELLO. I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO FINALLY BEING ALLOWED TO TALK TO THE REST OF YOU.

WHAT?

WHO SAID THAT?

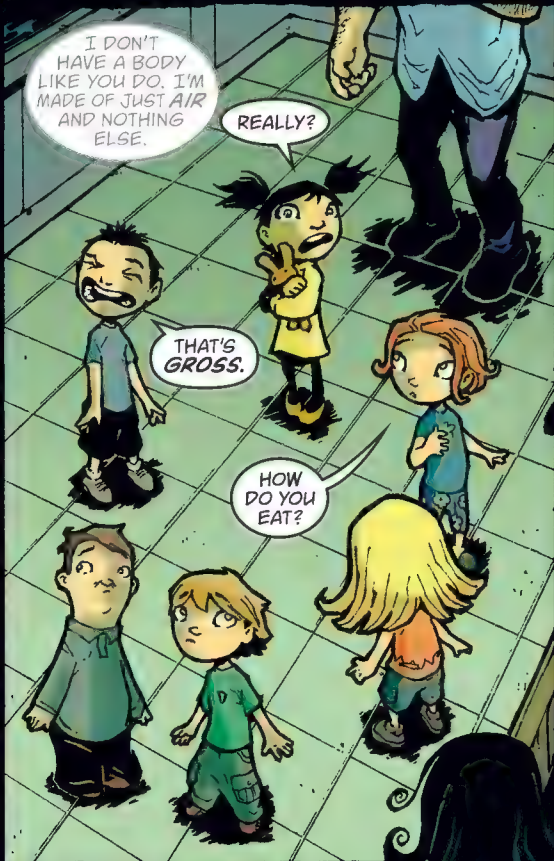
HE'S INDIVISIBLE!



INVISIBLE. YES, THAT'S RIGHT.

WOW! THAT'S SO COOL! WHEN DO WE LEARN TO DO THAT?

YOU DON'T. GHOST IS **UNIQUE**. HE'S NOT JUST ANOTHER THING YOU UNRULY THUGS CAN LEARN TO TURN INTO.



I DON'T HAVE A BODY LIKE YOU DO. I'M MADE OF JUST AIR AND NOTHING ELSE.

REALLY?

THAT'S GROSS.

HOW DO YOU EAT?



I DON'T. WELL, I DO EAT, BUT ONLY OTHER TYPES OF AIR.

THAT'S IT? NO HOT DOGS, OR PIZZA BITES, OR NOODLES, OR ICE CREAM, OR EVEN BIRTHDAY CAKE?

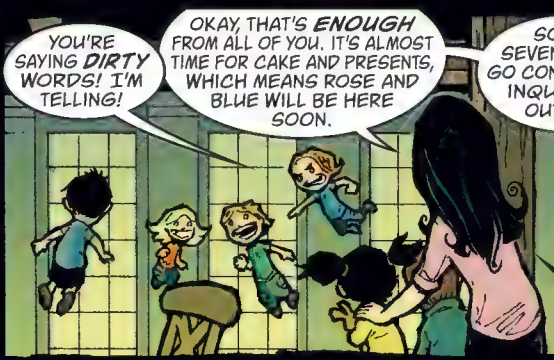
NOPE. NONE OF THAT.



BUT THAT'S TERRIBLE! HOW CAN YOU LIVE WITHOUT BIRTHDAY CAKE?

DO YOU POOP? HUH? DO YOU

NO, BUT I CAN FART REAL GOOD.



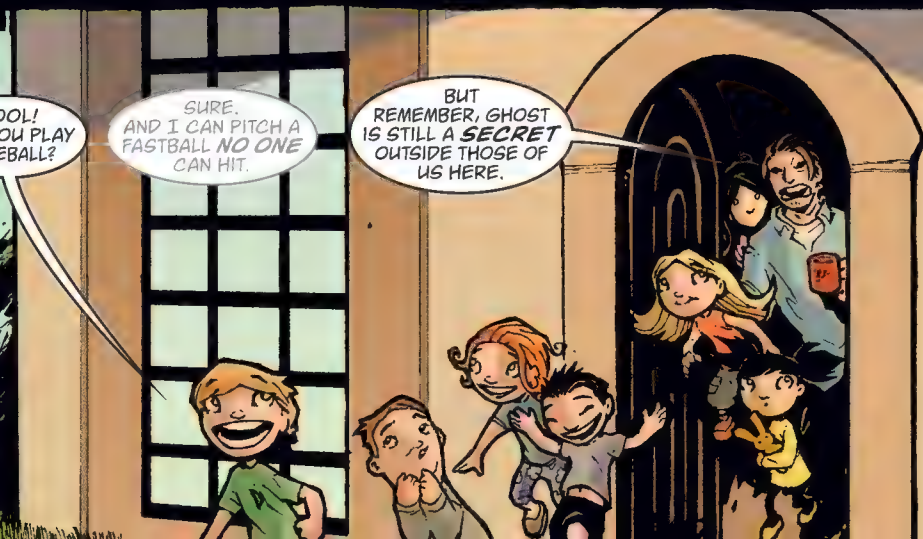
YOU'RE SAYING DIRTY WORDS! I'M TELLING!

OKAY, THAT'S ENOUGH FROM ALL OF YOU. IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR CAKE AND PRESENTS, WHICH MEANS ROSE AND BLUE WILL BE HERE SOON.

SO THE SEVEN OF YOU GO CONTINUE THE INQUISITION OUTSIDE.



HONEY, CAN YOU SEND THE CARPET FOR BLUE AND ROSE WHILE I SET THE TABLE?



COOL! CAN YOU PLAY BASEBALL?

SURE. AND I CAN PITCH A FASTBALL NO ONE CAN HIT.

BUT REMEMBER, GHOST IS STILL A SECRET OUTSIDE THOSE OF US HERE.

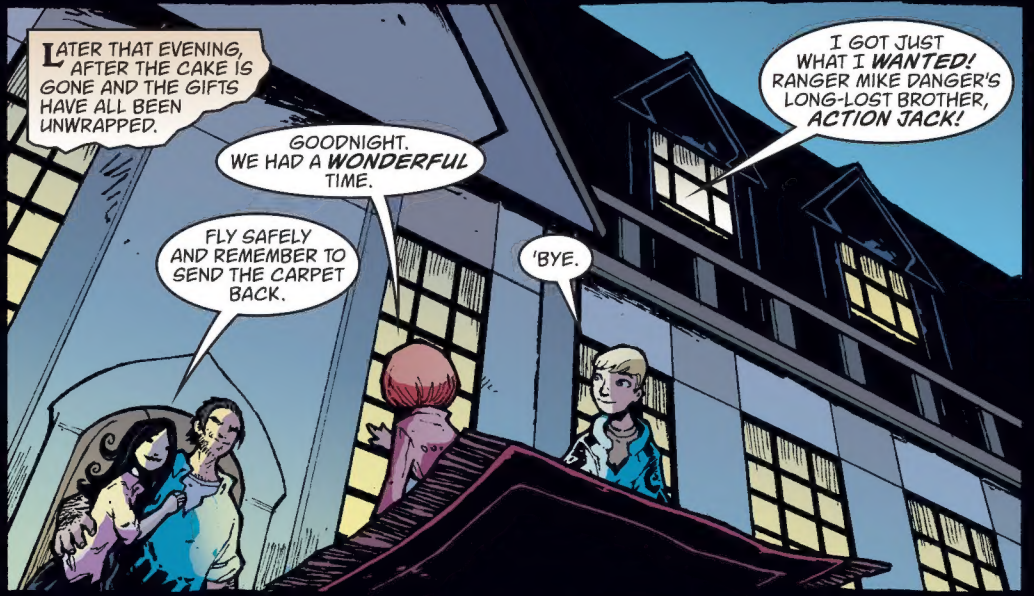
LATER THAT EVENING, AFTER THE CAKE IS GONE AND THE GIFTS HAVE ALL BEEN UNWRAPPED.

GOODNIGHT. WE HAD A WONDERFUL TIME.

FLY SAFELY AND REMEMBER TO SEND THE CARPET BACK.

'BYE.

I GOT JUST WHAT I WANTED! RANGER MIKE DANGER'S LONG-LOST BROTHER, ACTION JACK!



AND I FINALLY GOT KING ARTHUR IN MY KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE COLLECTION!

SO YOU BOYS ARE STILL PLAYING WITH DOLLS, HUH?

WANT TO BORROW A DRESS FROM MY MISTY MYSTERY DOLL TO PUT ON THEM?



IS IT JUST ME, OR WERE THE KIDS ACTING WEIRD ALL NIGHT?

WELL, THEY ALWAYS ACT WEIRD. BUT YEAH, THERE WAS SOMETHING IN THE AIR.



HEY, CAN I PLAY WITH THOSE?

SURE, GHOST. MOMMY AND DADDY SAID WE HAVE TO SHARE ALL OF OUR TOYS WITH YOU FROM NOW ON.



CAREFUL, THOUGH. MINE'S A HISTORICAL COLLECTOR'S ITEM.



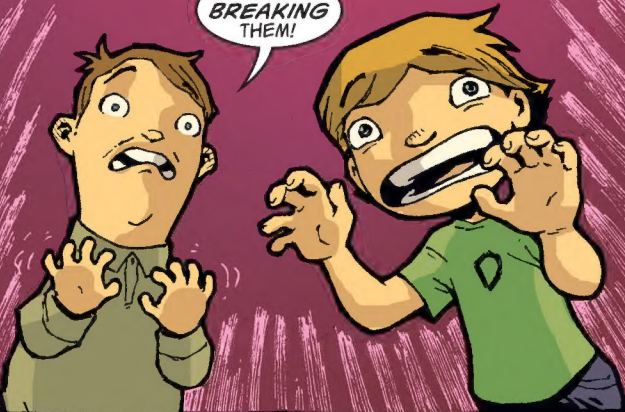
THESE THINGS ARE *STUPID*. THEY LOOK LIKE PEOPLE, BUT THEY DON'T HAVE LUNGS TO HIDE IN FOR WHEN I NEED TO STAY OUT OF GRANDPPA'S SIGHT.



HEY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

YOU'RE *BREAKING* THEM!



SORRY. AREN'T THEY SUPPOSED TO GO LIKE THAT?

YOU RAN KING ARTHUR'S SWORD RIGHT THROUGH ACTION JACK! YOU *CAN'T* DO THAT!

HOW DID YOU DO THAT WITH JUST A PLASTIC SWORD?



I DON'T KNOW. IT SEEMED LIKE THAT'S THE WAY THEY WANTED TO GO.

WELL, YOU *RUINED* IT! AND NOW I CAN'T GET THE SWORD OUT AGAIN!

DON'T BREAK IT! IT'S A *COLLECTOR'S* ITEM!



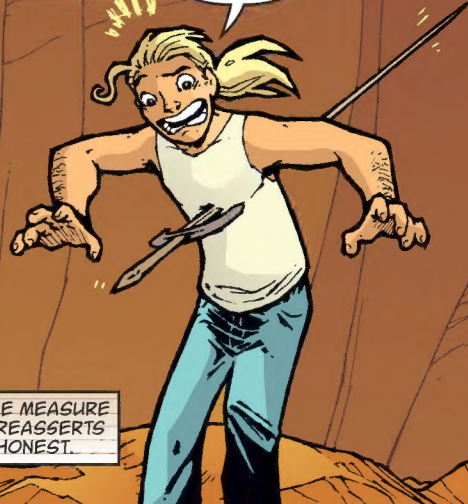
AND AT THAT MOMENT, ABOUT A THOUSAND-PLUS MILES AWAY...

HEY!



IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE FUNNY?

WELL, I'M *NOT* LAUGHING!



NEXT: SOME MEASURE OF SANITY REASSERTS ITSELF. HONEST.

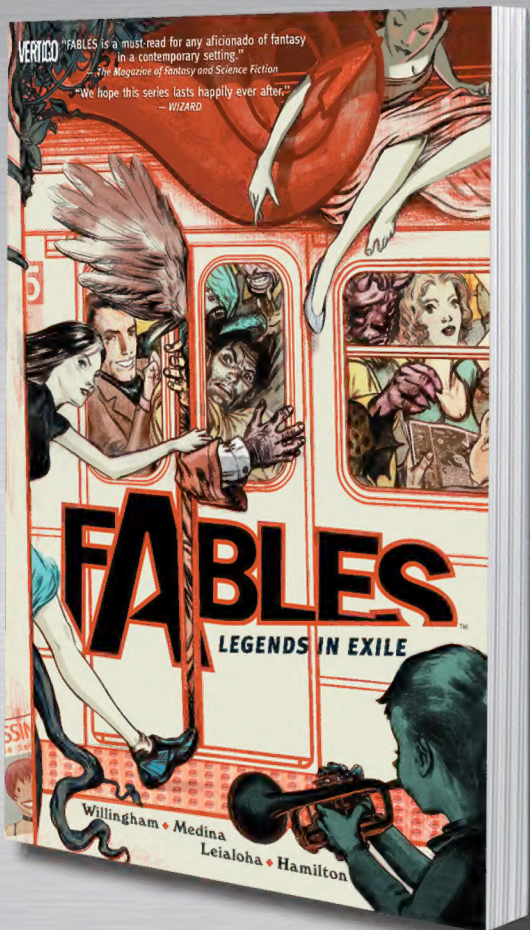
"FABLES is an excellent series in the tradition of SANDMAN, one that rewards careful attention and loyalty." – ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

# BILL WILLINGHAM

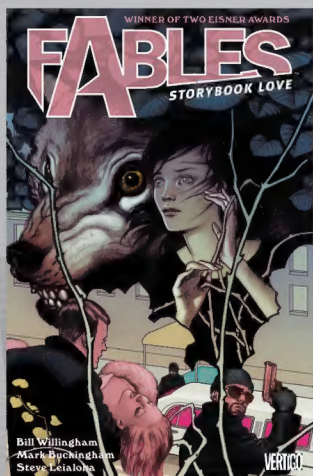
"[A] wonderfully twisted concept... features fairy tale characters banished to the noirish world of present-day New York."  
– THE WASHINGTON POST



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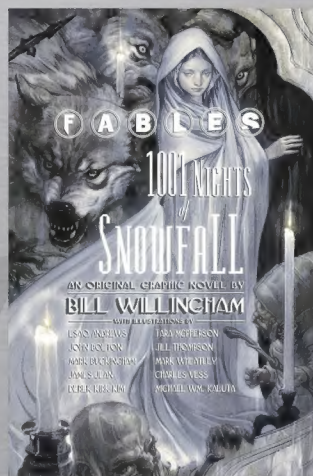
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